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Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/180 entitled "Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons", the present report summarizes the work done by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to implement that resolution and contains proposals on strengthening the capacities of the Office for the efficient implementation of its coordination functions.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/180 of 20 December 2006, entitled "Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons", the General Assembly recognized that trafficking in persons impaired the enjoyment of human rights, continued to pose a serious challenge to humanity and required a concerted international response.

2. The General Assembly also recognized that broad international cooperation was essential for effectively countering the threat of trafficking in persons and invited Member States and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to foster a global partnership against trafficking in persons. Underlining the importance of bilateral, subregional and regional partnerships, initiatives and actions, the Assembly also invited Member States to consider establishing various practical coordination and cooperation mechanisms at the national and international levels.

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3. In that respect, and pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/27 of 27 July 2006, entitled "Strengthening international cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting victims of such trafficking", Member States were invited to submit to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) information on their efforts to, among other things, employ a comprehensive approach to combating trafficking in persons and to set up mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations. The replies received were analysed in a report of the Secretary-General that was submitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its seventeenth session, held in Vienna from 14 to 18 April 2008 (E/CN.15/2008/6). In the report, it was concluded that national coordination mechanisms and national plans were valuable in developing a multi-agency response to prevent and counter human trafficking and that well-planned, comprehensive and effectively delivered awareness-raising and information campaigns were important components of national strategies to prevent human trafficking. The convening of joint training courses involving police officers, border police officers, social workers, members of non-governmental organizations, teachers, community workers and other members of civil society were considered valuable in promoting greater understanding and cooperation. In the report, it was noted that continued efforts were required to promote effective cooperation between law enf ement agencies and legal authorities at the bilateral, regional and interna levels.

4. In addition, in its resolution 61/180 the General Assembly welcomed the holding, in Tokyo on 26 and 27 September 2006, of a meeting of United Nations offices, funds and programmes with other international organizations to enhance cooperation on trafficking in persons and requested the Secretary-General to entrust the Executive Director of UNODC with coordinating the activities of the Inter-Agency Cooperation Group against Trafficking in Persons. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of Assembly resolution 61/180 and proposals on strengthening the capacities of UNODC for the efficient implementation of its coordination functions.

5. The present report contains information on mechanisms utilized and activities carried out by UNODC to implement its coordination functions, through its own research, technical assistance and legal advisory services, as well as its inter-agency coordination and cooperation activities.

II. Data collection

6. In its resolution 61/180, the General Assembly welcomed the report of UNODC entitled "Trafficking in persons: global patterns" and requested the Office to continue to prepare such periodic reports, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources. The report was published in 2006 and has been widely circulated to international entities, which have appreciated it as a valuable tool for the development of programmes against human trafficking. More recently, research has been carried out by UNODC in the framework of the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) with the aim of collecting and reviewing Government information on trafficking. That global overview will highlight which data are reliable and identify major information gaps. Information is being collected

on the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions of traffickers that have taken place in recent years and, where available, the number of victims officially identified and assisted by competent authorities. The data collected will be published in a report towards the end of 2008.

7. Despite such efforts, the data collection programmes of UNODC remain underfunded and thus require the priority attention of the donor community in particular, as such reports have proved to be fundamental tools for coordination, planning and monitoring activities.

III. Collaboration between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other international bodies

8. UNODC works closely with international, regional and non-governmental organizations involved in countering human trafficking to promote a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach, in the recognition that human trafficking is a multifaceted issue. Partner organizations include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). UNODC is also a member of the Expert Coordination Team of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which comprises representatives from major European and international institutions combating trafficking in persons in Europe.

A. Inter-Agency Cooperation Group against Trafficking in Persons

9. In its resolution 2006/27, the Economic and Social Council requested UNODC to organize a meeting on technical assistance for Member States in order to coordinate the work of agencies and bodies of the United Nations system against trafficking in persons. Consequently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, in cooperation with UNODC and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, hosted the first inter-agency coordination meeting on collaborative interventions to counter trafficking in persons, in Tokyo on 26 and 27 September 2006.

10. At the meeting, the Inter-Agency Cooperation Group against Trafficking in Persons was established with the aim of fostering coordination and cooperation among relevant United Nations agencies and other international organizations in order to assist States in preventing and combating human trafficking. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group is designed to promote effective and efficient use of existing resources, using to the extent possible mechanisms already in place at the regional and national levels, and to share information, experiences and good practices on the anti-trafficking activities of partner organizations with Governments, international, regional and non-governmental organizations and other relevant bodies.

11. Two meetings of the Inter-Agency Cooperation Group were held in New York in 2007. Representatives of the following entities have participated in the three meetings held to date: the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, OHCHR, UNODC, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNHCR, the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, ILO, the World Bank, IOM and INTERPOL. The Government of Belarus has supported financially the urgent work of the Inter-Agency Cooperation Group.

12. The next meeting of the Inter-Agency Cooperation Group, to be held in the second half of 2008, will be open to current Group members, organizations outside the United Nations system and Member States, all of whom will be duly informed of the meeting schedule and any progress made by the Group. It is hoped that participants at the meeting will bring forward ideas and suggestions for improving the Group. It should be remembered, however, that any further work done by the Group is subject to the availability of additional extrabudgetary funds.

B. Global Migration Group

13. The Global Migration Group is another mechanism for promoting inter-agency coordination. It brings together heads of agencies that seek to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better-coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. Currently, the Global Migration Group consists of the following entities: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, OHCHR, UNODC, UNDP, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the World Bank, IOM and ILO. The five regional commissions of the Secretariat are also part of the Group: the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

IV. Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking

14. UN.GIFT, launched in March 2008, is designed to raise awareness and enhance coordination and cooperation among all relevant players in the fight against trafficking in persons, in particular on national, regional and international levels. The philosophy behind UN.GIFT is that Governments, the international community, civil society, academia and the business community cannot meet the challenge of curbing human trafficking alone.

15. Member States have provided guidance on UN.GIFT through resolutions adopted by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and informal open-ended consultations. During those meetings, Member States have reviewed all

aspects of the Initiative, such as the outcomes of regional events, expert group meetings, the research process, the content of the meetings of the Steering Committee and the content and organization of the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, held in Vienna from 13 to 15 February 2008.

16. At the Vienna Forum, 28 panels, workshops, special sessions and side events were organized to explore the themes of vulnerability, impact and action and to offer an opportunity for dialogue on preventing and combating trafficking in persons. Special exhibits held in Vienna as part of the Forum but outside the conference venue also raised the visibility of the issue of human trafficking among the public. The *Vienna Forum Report: a Way Forward to Combat Human Trafficking* contains information on the discussions, activities and accomplishments at the Forum and is available at http://www.ungift.org/docs/ungift/pdf/vf/ebook2.pdf.

Steering Committee of the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking

17. The Steering Committee of UN.GIFT is the principal coordinating and advisory body to advance the goals of the Initiative. It was established by representatives of OHCHR, UNODC, UNICEF, ILO, OSCE and IOM. A representative of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, the donor who made UN.GIFT possible, is also represented at the meetings of the Steering Committee.

18. The Steering Committee has met on a monthly basis:

(a) To coordinate human trafficking interventions among its members and their respective networks and alliances;

(b) To create synergies and avoid duplication of effort to ensure the most cost-effective delivery of activities and actions to counter human trafficking;

(c) To coordinate the further development of the knowledge base on trafficking in human beings;

(d) To promote UN.GIFT, advocate its goals and advise on the global advocacy strategy and development of communication messages;

(e) To undertake assessments of gaps and needs in order to ensure relevance in the initiatives supported by UN.GIFT;

(f) To develop a monitoring mechanism, including the setting of indicators, to assess the impact of UN.GIFT;

(g) To ensure the sustainability of UN.GIFT objectives and mobilize resources for joint anti-human-trafficking programmes and projects.

V. Recommendations and conclusions

19. In its resolution 61/180, the General Assembly invited Member States to consider the advisability of a United Nations strategy or plan of action on preventing trafficking in persons. The potential strengths of a comprehensive United Nations strategy against human trafficking was also recognized in the final declaration of an international conference on violence against children, the

problems it creates and ways to prevent it, held in Minsk in April 2008. In that declaration, it was suggested that such a strategy could be useful in enhancing coherence, effectiveness, coordination and consistency of efforts on the part of all relevant stakeholders (Member States, United Nations entities, international and non-governmental organizations and the business community) in combating trafficking in persons.

20. During the thematic debate on human trafficking held by the General Assembly on 3 June 2008, several States called for the elaboration of a global action plan in support of the effective implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.[1] Such an action plan could spell out concrete measures for Member States to take in addressing the conditions that make people vulnerable to trafficking, to prevent and combat trafficking, to protect victims and to assist all partners. The framework of such an action plan could be based on the three Ps of human trafficking: prevention, prosecution and protection. A fourth P, on partnership, could also be considered.

21. The General Assembly also plays an important role in coordinating international action against trafficking in persons and facilitating the effective implementation of both the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.[2] In resolution 61/180, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to improve upon the fledgling inter-agency coordination group in order to enhance cooperation and coordination and to facilitate a holistic and comprehensive approach by the international community to the problem of trafficking in persons. As already mentioned, the provision of voluntary contributions for the continuation of this important Group is imperative. In addition, the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking organized in the framework of UN.GIFT and related events have created a momentum and provided a unique opportunity to catalyse cross-border cooperation in the fight against trafficking in persons.

22. UNODC expresses its gratitude to donors for the voluntary contributions made available to strengthening the Office's capacities in its coordinating functions and invites Member States to strongly consider increasing the level of funding provided through the regular budget of the United Nations for implementing the anti-trafficking work of UNODC.

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2237, No. 39574.

[2] Ibid., vol. 2241, No. 39574.